Moving In Slow Motion

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Moving In Slow Motion

by boasamishipper

Summary

Maverick never thought he'd actually like the nitty gritty details of working at TOPGUN — the lesson plans, the tests, the endless paperwork — but it grows on him over time. Viper's even taken to giving Maverick these approving glances when he thinks Maverick's not looking. He's got a good thing going here.

A year after that, in walks Iceman Kazansky, cool as can be, and Maverick starts to think that he might have a problem.

- Translation into 中文-普通话 國語 available: Moving In Slow Motion by luosi1021

Maverick's first year at TOPGUN passes largely without incident. He and Charlie go their separate ways, Carole calls once a week and fills him in on everything short of what Bradley's thinking at any given moment, and the kids (cocky little shits in the air and on the ground) don't give him too much trouble. He never thought he'd actually like the nitty gritty details of working at TOPGUN — the lesson plans, the tests, the endless paperwork — but it grows on him over time. Viper's even taken to giving Maverick these approving glances when he thinks Maverick's not looking. He's got a good thing going here.

A year after that, in walks Iceman Kazansky, cool as can be, and Maverick starts to think that he might have a problem.

Not with work, that is. Work is fine. And between the uniform and his good looks, he's not exactly hurting for someone to sleep with. But ever since Ice came back, and their rivalry got friendlier, Maverick's found himself more interested in talking with Ice over drinks than flirting with any of the women who drape themselves over him at the O Club bar counter. Goose would probably say *Told you so, Mav,* but Ice actually is a genuinely good guy. Maverick likes Ice's skill in the air, his dedication to the job and the kids, his dry wit and the sound of his laugh — he even likes that Ice doesn't smile at everyone because it makes the smiles Maverick gets every now and then even better.

And if his stomach tends to give a little wild jolt when that happens, Maverick figures it's not a big deal. They're friends. Everything's fine.

Then the women that Maverick takes home start taking on a hint of the blond and the tall, and at first, Maverick thinks it has to be because of Charlie — that somewhere, deep down, he hasn't gotten over her. And yeah, there's something of Charlie in their smiles, in their eyes, in the way they ride him hard and tell him to keep his hands above his head, but Maverick never looks at Amanda or Jenny or any of them after or during and wishes Charlie were there instead.

"Night, Mav," Kelly — one of the few women who actually call him Maverick, after he asks — had once whispered, and Maverick had stiffened just for a second, because her voice had been lower and rough from sleep and maybe he'd drunk more at the O Club than he'd realized, because for a second he'd thought, for a second he'd imagined that she sounded like —

Well. He figures it doesn't matter what he'd imagined. He was half drunk and fucked out, and when she'd paraded around his kitchen looking for coffee the next morning, clad in a thong and one of his shirts, any thought of Ice had been driven from his head completely. It's fine. He's fine. Everything's fine.

Then it gets worse.

Maverick's shoved up against the stall in a civilian bar's out of order bathroom, his hands threading tightly through Ross's (if that's even his real name) short blond hair while Ross kisses him deep and grinds hard against him, both of them rocking together, when he starts thinking about Ice again. And then again, when Ross finally yanks down Maverick's jeans

and underwear in one fell swoop and hoists him up so Maverick's sitting on the edge of the sink, flushed and breathing heavily and then almost choking when Ross shoves his thumb and then his fingers into Maverick's mouth. His eyes squeeze shut as he works his tongue over Ross's knuckles, sucking on his fingers — Maverick wonders if Ice would groan at that too, like Ross is doing now, and if he'd guide Maverick's hand to his cock, let Maverick slick him up, or make Maverick do it while he watches with a too-steady dark gaze, and then those wet fingers are probing at his entrance — it's a familiar burn, painful in a good way, but he doesn't know why he's shivering so much.

Ice's hands are bigger than Ross's, Maverick thinks, bigger than Maverick's own for sure — they measured once, when they were almost too drunk to stand — and his fingers are longer too. He'd probably — he hisses, and Ross's smirk darkens as he brushes up against that spot again — Jesus, he'd probably take a long time working Maverick open, probably draw it out until Maverick was shoving his hips back on Ice's fingers like he is right now and gasping out, "Fuck just do it already, come on, *come on—"*

"Jump for me," Ross demands, pulling out his fingers abruptly — too abrupt, Ice wouldn't do that — and Maverick does; wraps his legs around Ross's hips and lets Ross shove him back against that stall wall for balance. He's in the middle of wondering if Ice would lift him up like this too — he *could,* he's tall enough, he's strong enough, Maverick's seen the way his muscles flex when he stands around in the CLR in nothing but a fucking towel — when Ross pushes into him, and Maverick groans, long and low in the back of his throat, every thought evaporating.

"Gonna come for me, baby?" Ross breathes. He's gripping hard at Maverick's hips as he thrusts up, and Maverick can't decide if Ice would do the same thing — heat rushes to his face as he imagines that, Ice fucking him hard enough to leave marks, Ice biting at Maverick's throat, his shoulder, his lips brushing against Maverick's skin, and he moans. "Yeah, that's right, look at you, getting fucked in the bathroom like a cheap fucking slut—"

Maverick wonders if Ice would say that. Would he, if Maverick asked? Would he talk at all? Maverick bets he'd talk. Maverick bets it'd be a mix of the *filthiest* things mixed with endearments that Maverick doesn't deserve, he'd say, "You're so fucking tight, baby, you feel so good around my cock," anything that'd make Maverick go red all over, and then he wonders if Ice would call him baby, or just Mav, or if he'd pin Maverick to the mattress by his wrists and purr *Lieutenant Commander* in his ear, he might — or he might be quiet, methodical, laser-focused, might drop kisses all along Maverick's shoulders, might drop his face into the crook between his neck and shoulder and bite hard enough to break the skin, soothing the bite with the softness of his tongue, right before wrapping a hand around Maverick's cock and jerking him off, his grip tight and hot and *perfect—*

Maverick comes then, loud and unpretty, Ross's hand wrapped around his cock, and he can feel it when Ross comes too — only it's like it's all happening to someone else. He still feels that distance when Ross puts him down, when he feels the wet stickiness trickling down his thighs, when Ross puts a wad of wet paper towels in Maverick's hands and leaves without asking if Maverick needs them or not. Maverick cleans himself up and stays there for a while, leaning against the stall.

It's about then that he realizes this might be a bigger problem than he'd thought.

It doesn't have to be a big deal, Maverick rationalizes later, even though rationalizing anything is not how he normally operates. People get attracted to their friends all the time; hell, Goose and Carole were friends long before they fell in love and got married. Not that whatever this is is *love.* They're friends, good friends, and Maverick likes hanging out with Ice, and working with him, and having him on his wing, by his side, in his life — but it's not that kind of love. It isn't.

And even if it is, Maverick won't do anything about it. It means too much to him now, what they have, and he won't ruin it by making a pass at Ice, who probably doesn't even like men anyway. Who definitely deserves someone better than him. Someone who isn't fucked up.

So Maverick carries on like normal, and hides what he's really feeling whenever Ice grins at him after a hop, or nags him about his unfinished paperwork, or twirls his pen over his fingers whenever Jester talks too long during their staff meetings. Maybe he isn't fine, but he will be. No one ever has to know.

When Jester retires nine months later, Viper starts musing more and more about the idea of retirement — not right away, but in the next couple of years or so, once he's trained up some worthy replacements. Maverick's not sure what to think of the idea of Viper leaving; he's been there since the seventies, as much of a fixture as the old Navy recruitment posters in the student locker room. Viper has it in his head that he wants Maverick and Ice to replace him when he retires, if he and Ice are still teaching here by then, and starts training them on the minutiae of the operation before either of them even agree to the idea. Maverick's already resigned himself to pining for Ice for the next forty years, so the thought of running TOPGUN with Ice until then seems like a dangerously pleasant kind of torture.

Then one day towards the end of the summer session, Viper pulls them both aside. Ice stands beside Maverick in his flight suit, his hair windswept, so Maverick isn't paying as much attention as he should be. Still, he gets the gist of it: big annual conference at NAS Lemoore, a lot of important people from all the naval air stations are going, and Viper wants him and Ice to come along this time. Since Maverick doesn't have any plans for the week off (or a choice in the matter), he books a hotel room, packs his things, and drives the five hours to Lemoore, California on his bike the Sunday afternoon after graduation.

The hotel lobby is crowded with people by the time he gets there, including Viper and Ice, weirdly enough. It's almost ten at night, he figured they'd both be in their rooms now.

"They just started doing reservations by computer," Viper says, before Maverick can ask. He's smoking a cigarette, the smoke curling around his fingers, and with his other hand, he adjusts the sunglasses hanging from the collar of his shirt. It feels unspeakably weird seeing Viper in civilian clothing; the same way he felt when he was sixteen and ran into his math teacher at the liquor store. "The system crashed this morning."

Maverick leans against the wall and tips his head back. "Fantastic."

The hotel receptionist looks extremely frazzled by the time Maverick and Ice and Viper are called up to the front desk. She finds Viper's name at the back of the log book easily and gives him the key to a single room on the third floor, but when Maverick and Ice ask for their room keys, she shakes her head. "I'm sorry, we don't have any rooms available at the moment."

Maverick blinks. Ice says, very calmly, "What?"

"We don't have any more rooms available."

"I don't understand," Ice says, while Maverick wonders what exactly he did to deserve this. "We both made reservations. Do you have our reservations?"

"Yes," the receptionist says, looking and sounding on the verge of tears. "But we've run out of rooms."

"The reservation is supposed to *hold* the room," Maverick says. Viper looks like he's refraining from laughing with great difficulty. "That's why you have the reservation. How do you run out of rooms?"

"I know why we have reservations, sir," the receptionist says, and just as Maverick is about to snap back *No I don't actually think you do,* another man shows up behind the desk, smiling placidly at them.

"What seems to be the problem, gentlemen?"

Maverick tugs at the zipper of his jacket frustratedly while Ice explains again, with no small amount of impatience. At this point, he doesn't care if he ends up with a room with no air conditioning and an air mattress on the floor. All he wants now is to take a shower and pass out until morning.

The manager is poring over the log book himself when Maverick tunes back in. "It seems we had a last-minute cancellation this afternoon," he's saying. The receptionist ducks her head, blushing. "There is a room available — it's a business suite, but of course I'll only charge both of you a single room rate."

Maverick opens his mouth to protest, then closes it. He glances over at Ice, whose entire face is sealed off like a tomb. Then Ice meets his eyes, and gives a miniscule shrug. "I'm fine with it if you are."

Maverick turns back to the receptionist, holds out his hand. "We'll take it."

For as long as Maverick knew him, Goose had a phrase for every occasion — every fork in the road and rock bottom. *Slow and steady wins the race,* and *it's easy to hate what you can't get,* and *don't count your chickens before they hatch,* though Carole liked to update chickens to geese because it made Goose laugh. But every time Maverick got stuck in his own head — after he lost his qualifications as section leader, after he and Goose lost out on an assignment

— and started wishing for something he thought would be better, Goose would always clap him on the back and say, “Be careful what you wish for, Mav.”

Now, looking at the giant bed in the middle of the hotel suite, Maverick thinks maybe he should have phrased his wish to the universe for a place to sleep a little differently.

Not that there’s nothing else in the room. It’s bigger than the average hotel room — almost bigger than Maverick’s base housing. There’s a kitchen table that could double as a conference table, and a couple of desks and a big dresser, and a balcony with a view of the pool outside, but Maverick still can’t stop staring at the fucking bed. The bed for *both of them.* The sheets are turned down, the pillows clean and fluffed up. Ice is standing right next to him, looking at the bed like it’s a ratty mattress on the floor with a dirty sheet half on it.

Maverick clears his throat. His hands are shoved in his pockets, his fingers clutching convulsively at his bike keys. “I’ll take the bathtub.”

Ice glances over at him sharply. “Don’t be stupid.”

“I’ll steal a pillow and a blanket, I’ll be fine in there.”

“I’m not going to let you sleep in the bathtub for five fucking days, Maverick.”

“Fine,” Maverick says. “Fine, then I’ll take the floor here and you can have the bed—”

Ice’s laugh is short, mostly just air, and he drops his gaze. “If it’s that big a deal to you,” he says at last, awkward and quiet in a way he normally isn’t, “I’ll take the floor and you can have the bed.”

“Not a chance, Kazansky,” Maverick says automatically. Ice doesn’t say anything, but the tension in the air disappears as suddenly as it had arrived. He licks his lips, his mouth dry as dust. “So I guess that leaves, uh…”

“Yeah.” Ice lets out a long breath and sets his duffel bag down on the floor. Still not making eye contact, he says, “You want the left side or the right?”

Maverick swallows. “Doesn’t matter.”

Ice nods and heads for the bed, sits on the edge and starts working off his shoes. “Fine,” he says. “I’ll take the left, then.”

Maverick grabs his backpack, heads into the bathroom, and strips down to his underwear and a clean T-shirt. By the time he comes back out, Ice’s duffel bag is empty and hanging on the back of a chair, and Ice is sitting on the bed in nothing but his underwear, pulling his shirt over his head.

He averts his gaze instantly, pissed off at his heart for speeding up. Jesus. Almost a year they’ve been changing next to each other in the CLR, or coming out of the shower at the same time, and *this* is what makes him feel like he can’t breathe.

Ice moves past him to use the bathroom, closing the door behind him, and Maverick busies himself with putting his own clothes away until he hears the door creak open, and then the mattress dips and the sheets rustle. Taking a breath that doesn't feel anywhere near deep enough, Maverick turns off the lights, crosses the room and gets under the covers, lying very still on his back next to Ice in the bed.

"Well," Maverick says, once his eyes have adjusted and he's determined that there's definitely nothing of interest in the completely uninteresting ceiling. "This could be worse."

"How do you figure?"

"We could have gotten a twin bed."

Ice snorts. Maverick turns his head to look over at Ice, who's looking right back at him, smiling a little. The covers are pulled up halfway to his chest, his hands resting on his stomach. "Yeah," he says dryly. "That would've been worse."

Maverick tries for an easy grin, but it feels stiff on his face — every cell in his body is screaming from the awareness that Iceman Kazansky is lying *right there,* of every inch of space that separates them, how far he'd have to reach to brush against Ice's hand. Of how fucking easy it would be to touch Ice and then just never stop. "Well," he says, smirking, "I can think of a lot worse people to spend a few nights sharing a bed with."

For a second, he's worried he went too far, was too obvious, but Ice just laughs. "True," he says seriously. His eyes gleam with mischief. "You could have ended up bunking with Viper."

"Ugh, Jesus." Maverick almost gags. "Thanks a lot, Kazansky. Never gonna get to sleep with that image in my head."

Ice's hand brushes against Maverick's. Maverick doesn't jump out of his skin, but it's a near thing. Still, his heart is pounding so hard he almost misses Ice saying wryly, "I think you'll manage, Mitchell."

Despite Ice's belief in him (and his own exhaustion), it still takes Maverick over an hour to fall asleep, long after Ice's breathing evens out. He keeps thinking about brushing Ice's hand the way Ice did to him, wonders if he could pass it off as a coincidence, an accident. But he keeps his hands to himself, shuts his eyes and lies still, and the next thing he knows he's out.

Maverick wakes up slow, feeling inexplicably warm and content, so much so that he can't do anything other than blink languidly, blearily as he presses into the warm body at his back, snuggling closer—

His eyes snap open.

Fuck. Fuck, God — he thought he was dreaming, but it's all too fucking real. He *is* in bed with someone, he's in bed with *Ice,* who's currently pressed up against Maverick's back, breathing in slowly and steadily, his arm wrapped loosely around Maverick's waist. Ice is still

sleeping, somehow, but his body is awake in *every* sense of the word; Maverick can feel Ice's cock poking him in the ass, and the hot flush Maverick breaks out in does absolutely nothing to make his *own* morning wood go away.

Okay. This is fine. It's — five to seven now, the front desk will give them a wake up call any minute. He'll just get up and go take a shower, and Ice will wake up to answer the phone and he'll never know that they were…that they were *spooning,* Jesus fucking hell. Good. That's a good plan. So he's going to move, now.

He doesn't.

Worse yet, he doesn't *want* to. Everything he wants right now, he's got no business wanting or even thinking about. Especially not when Ice is lying next to him — practically on top of him — asleep and oblivious to the thoughts screaming in Maverick's head.

Two minutes to seven. Now or never. Maverick takes a breath through gritted teeth as he gingerly reaches around to lift Ice's hand — and then the phone rings.

Maverick bites his tongue to keep himself from swearing out loud, and then the inside of his cheek when he feels Ice move away from him. Hears Ice answer the phone groggily, and then hang up in the next ten seconds. And Maverick's gone face to face with MiGs, flipped one off without breaking a sweat, but somehow it takes more courage than he's ever exerted to turn over and look Ice in the eye.

Ice is blushing. They aren't touching anymore — Maverick's entire body feels cold now that Ice's arm isn't around him — but Ice is blushing, actually blushing, and his eyes meet Maverick's like it's taking every cell in his body to do that much. "Mav," Ice starts, "I'm," and Maverick cuts him off, desperate to change the subject.

"Do you want to shower first or should I?"

Ice presses his lips together, drops his gaze — but not fast enough to hide the hurt in his eyes. Maverick feels like he got kicked in the stomach, and immediately scrambles for something to say to fix things.

"It's fine, Kazansky, seriously. Nothing to be sorry for." Maverick tries for a smile. "My virtue's still intact, so — no harm done."

Ice looks up at that, and Maverick is beyond relieved to see that he's smiling now. "Good to hear," he says. "Mind if I take the first shower?"

"All yours," Maverick says, and slumps back heavily into the pillows once the bathroom door closes behind him. He gives himself thirty seconds to close his eyes and bask in the feeling of the warmth he'd woken up to, and then climbs out of bed himself.

The first day of the conference is all introductions, brief overviews for the next few days to come. Maverick endures tight handshakes and cocky smiles in smoke-crowded conference rooms at the base while Viper introduces him and Ice around. It's a lot of information thrown

at him at once, but he keeps his mind on it, doesn't let his smile slip off his face. Even when Viper asks casually how his night was, Maverick doesn't dare let his mind slip to beds, or Ice, or Ice in a bed with him. He's got this.

If Ice decides to keep a cool polite distance between them all day, Maverick doesn't let himself pay attention to that either.

They're at a shit bar a couple miles from the hotel with half of the heads of the naval air stations when Ice approaches Maverick at the bar counter and says, out of the blue, "I'll take the floor tonight."

Maverick frowns. "What?"

Ice looks at him like he's an idiot, which — well, at least there's something familiar about this. "The floor," he says. "Instead of the bed."

"No, I got that part. I just don't see why you need to."

Ice's eyebrows practically disappear into his hair. Maverick raises his eyebrows right back, trying to not to blink. Looking at Ice in his uniform, his blond hair gleaming under the fluorescents, his strong jaw and sharp pale eyes, feels a bit like looking directly into the sun — it almost hurts to focus on him for more than a few seconds at a time. "Figured we'd both get better sleep that way." He chews his bottom lip for a moment, like he's picking his way through a verbal minefield. "And you wouldn't be as…uncomfortable."

Maverick almost laughs out loud. Jesus, he *wishes* all he felt was uncomfortable. "I wasn't," he says honestly. "Uncomfortable, I mean. I was surprised, that's all." He nudges him, the two beers he'd already drank giving him some liquid courage. "Didn't figure you to be a cuddler, Kazansky."

Ice's smile is mostly teeth. "Maybe I'll get a commendation for it."

You should, Maverick wants to say, but doesn't. He's not anywhere near drunk enough for that. "Like I said," he says lightly, "there's worse people to cuddle with for a few nights." Because that's what Goose would say at a time like this. Something to ease the tension.

Ice stares at him for a second longer, before the tension in his shoulders starts to ease. "Fair enough," he says, and heads off to the pool table without asking Maverick to follow, where Johnson from Pax River is staring at the cue like he doesn't know which end to use. Maverick's always down to watch Ice kick someone's ass at pool, so he perches himself on a nearby stool to watch the show, hollering pointers along with the others while Viper and some of the older officers roll their eyes and pretend they're above it all.

If he enjoys the sidelong grin Ice gives him after it's all over more than the entire game, that's no one's business but his own.

The next morning, Maverick wakes up to the phone ringing, and ringing, and *ringing,* and grumbles his way through six layers of dream back to reality. “Fucking answer it already,” he manages, and buries his head in his pillow.

Except it’s not his pillow.

His blood pressure skyrockets just as his heart ceases to beat altogether, and everything comes roaring into too-clear focus. He’s got his face buried in Ice’s shirt; one arm draped over Ice’s stomach, his leg resting over Ice’s hip. He’s lying on top of Ice’s other arm, preventing him from reaching over to answer the phone, and because this whole clinging like an octopus situation is not bad enough, Maverick’s cock is hard and heavy in his boxers. Jesus, it’s literally all he can do to stop himself from grinding his hips and pressing even closer to Ice until he comes in his underwear like a teenager.

“Mitchell,” Ice says, bizarrely soft, and Maverick almost jumps out of his own skin in his haste to get off him. Ice doesn’t even bring the phone to his ear this time, just picks it up and slams the receiver back down again. The room goes blessedly silent.

“Sorry,” Maverick says. His voice feels too loud in the quiet; stilted, forced, just like the smile he shoves on his face. “Shower. I’m…going to shower.”

“Alright.” Ice says it like they woke up normally — like they woke up in separate beds, not touching each other at all — and he looks so worried and so damn beautiful with the sunbeam coming in through the window and illuminating his face, his light blond eyelashes, his somehow still perfect hair, that Maverick almost grabs him by the face and kisses him, everything else be damned.

Thirty seconds later, Maverick’s standing underneath the hot shower spray, resting his forehead against the wall. He wants to bang his head against the chipped tiles until he can somehow go back in time from sheer blunt force head trauma and prevent the hotel’s reservation system from crashing — but Ice will probably hear, and with his luck, he’ll probably give himself a concussion before any of that happens.

Maverick can’t hear Ice moving around outside — not that he can hear much of anything over the rush of the water anyway — but lets himself imagine that Ice is still in bed, still rumpled and sleep-warm and soft, so much softer than Maverick had imagined, and lets his imagination guide his hand to his cock. He imagines shutting off the water and marching out of the bathroom and joining Ice in bed, and pulling Ice close and kissing him deep, touching every inch of Ice that he can reach — and Ice whispering *Mav, Mav* over and over again, his head thrown back and his eyes squeezed shut, begging him to go faster, *harder—*

Maverick has to brace himself against the wall when he comes, and keeps himself balanced that way while the water slides down his body and he tries to catch his breath. Fuck.

“Talk to me, Goose,” he mutters, looking down at the dog tags he’s got clutched in his other hand.

The dog tags provide no immediate answer.

He passes by Ice on the way out of the bathroom, and neither of them say a word.

Maverick spends the entire day wishing he could just walk straight off base, climb on his bike, and ride until all of his feelings get stripped away by the wind. He can't concentrate on any of the presentations, mixes up names, and can feel Ice's stare on the back of his neck like a red-hot brand. Needless to say, he's a little on edge, and when Viper asks him in the middle of lunch how he slept, commenting that he looked 'pretty well-rested, considering,' Maverick has to bite the inside of his cheek to keep himself from succumbing to the childish urge to kick Viper in the shin under the table.

Ice, when asked the same question, gives a one word response and changes the subject completely. The Iceman, through and through.

He can do this. Just a few more days, and they'll be back at TOPGUN in their separate beds and separate houses, and he'll never again have to fall asleep in a bed that smells of him and Ice or wake up tangled in the embrace of someone he knows he can't have.

Everyone makes plans to go back to that bar for drinks after dinner, and when Maverick gets there, Viper tells him that Ice went back to the hotel early. Said he had a headache, or didn't get enough sleep the night before. It takes two and a half beers for Maverick's anger to fade into what it really is: disappointment, surprise. Hurt that he can feel in his bones, in the pit of his stomach.

He can't fault Ice for wanting some alone time, away from him. Everybody gets sick of him eventually, leaves him one way or the other. But he'd thought...well, *you can be my wingman anytime,* and all that. Maybe it didn't extend as far as he'd thought it would. Or hoped.

Maverick means to give Ice a piece of his mind when he gets back to the hotel, but the words die on his tongue the second he walks through the door and sees Ice asleep already.

He's fallen asleep next to Ice for two nights in a row now, woken up beside him, but he'd never actually *seen* Ice asleep before. It's…he looks younger, softer, the planes of his face smooth and placid as his chest rises and falls. The covers are pushed down around his stomach; in the dim glow of the bedside lamp, Maverick can see the faded navy blue lettering of his USNA T-shirt. Maverick's entire heart clenches, and it takes several shaky breaths before he snaps out of his trance and decides to get changed for bed.

There's a pair of swim trunks hanging over the curtain rod in the bathroom. Maverick brushes his teeth fervently, desperately trying to keep himself from imagining Ice swimming in the pool, effortlessly cutting through the water with machine-like efficiency, water droplets trickling down Ice's temple and shoulders and bare back, clinging to honey-tan skin. He ends up choking ungracefully on his spit, and splashes his face with cold water until he's sure he can go to bed without making an idiot of himself.

But the second Maverick turns off the lamp, lifts the covers and crawls into bed, Ice stirs. Then, as Maverick lies as still as can be, Ice turns over onto his side, puts an arm around

Maverick and pulls him close. Makes a tiny, satisfied noise, and then his breathing evens out again.

Maverick's heart is pounding.

He should move. He's got to move, right now. He should move away, or just get up and leave the bed altogether, sleep on the floor or in the bathroom like he'd originally suggested. If he moves, Ice won't be embarrassed or uncomfortable for what he did when he was half-asleep, and they'll go back to normal, and everything will be fine. He should move, now that Ice is asleep again.

But he doesn't. He stays right where he is, and he closes his eyes and moves closer, and he lets himself have this — even if he knows it can only last until morning.

Maverick wakes up.

Judging by the sunlight streaming in through the window, it's earlier than usual — and probably the reason he's up so early in the first place. He didn't close the curtains last night, though to be fair, he had a lot on his mind at the time.

And from the looks of it — from the feel of it — he's going to have a lot on his mind today too.

Ice's face is tucked into the nape of Maverick's neck, his body flush to Maverick's, their feet tangled together. His arm is warm and heavy around Maverick's waist, and the covers must have gotten pushed down again in the middle of the night, because Ice's hand rests low on Maverick's stomach, fingers splayed open and almost touching the waistband of his underwear.

It's almost funny, the irony of it all. Maverick remembers what Goose told him about Ice before they first met, when Ice was just another stranger in the O Club: *that's him. Iceman. Ice cold, no mistakes, wears you down. You get bored, do something stupid, and he's got you.* Even after he actually saw Ice fly, he'd still spent more evenings than not scoffing at Goose about Ice's style: technically perfect, but no imagination, no finesse. He'd never understood — and still doesn't really — how Ice could stand to lock himself down in a box in the one place you could be *free;* how anybody could see the endless stretch of blue sky around you and still insist on doing everything by the book.

Turns out he'd been right. However much Ice could control everything he did in the air and on the ground, he had to relinquish control sometime, loosen up a little. Maverick just hadn't thought that he'd ever see that happen — or that it'd hurt so much to experience first-hand.

He's not sure how long it is before Ice wakes up too, but he can pinpoint the second — the heartbeat — that Ice suddenly goes stiff against his back, awake and all too aware of where his hand is resting on Maverick's body. Maverick, in turn, is acutely aware of the moment Ice takes a slightly shaky breath, of Ice's piercing gaze on the back of his head.

Finally, Ice slowly lifts his hand off Maverick's stomach, starts to turn over — but before Maverick can stop himself, or even think about it for more than a second, he puts his hand over Ice's and keeps it right where it is.

"Maverick."

Maverick's never heard Ice say his name like that, unsteady and unsure, and he can't make himself say a damn thing back, not even when every beat of his heart and thought in his head is just *Ice Ice Ice.* He swallows hard, keeps his hand where it is, and starts to guide Ice's hand lower, inch by slow inch, the warmth spreading and spiraling through his whole body. He wants Ice to touch him, *needs* Ice to touch him so bad he's about to come apart from it all, and now Ice's whole hand is on his waistband, so close to his cock that it twitches painfully, and maybe if he slides Ice's hand down even further into his underwear Ice will finally, *finally* get it, finally fucking understand and put him out of his misery one way or another—

"Maverick," Ice snaps, and Maverick twists around to look at him. His eyes are searching Maverick's face just as desperately as Maverick is searching his, for an answer, an explanation, anything. His jaw is clenched so tightly it's a miracle he managed to get a word out at all. "Don't do this."

Maverick swallows hard. "Don't do what?"

Ice is shaking, almost imperceptibly — from anger, from fear, Maverick doesn't know. "Fuck with me."

"I'm not."

"Bullshit," Ice says harshly, but whatever else he'd meant to say or do after that is lost in the second that Maverick thinks *fuck it,* grabs his face, and kisses him.

Ice's mouth is warm and stiff, the rest of him horribly tense for about three agonizing seconds, and then his lips soften and part and his whole body relaxes and holy fuck, he's kissing Maverick *back,* he's *kissing Maverick back,* and he's got a hand clutching the nape of Maverick's neck, the other wrapped tightly around Maverick's back, and Maverick surges forward, his hands threading tightly through Ice's hair, his hips shifting upwards, seeking friction even as he moans into Ice's mouth.

"Fucking idiot," Ice is saying, breaking away long enough to get the words out before going back in and kissing Maverick deeper, harder, "Jesus, Mav, why the fuck didn't you *say* something—"

I was fucking trying, *you stubborn prick,* Maverick wants to retort, *why didn't* you *say something,* but Ice is pressing him down against the bed now, his body warm and heavy on top of Maverick's, and well, he can save his indignation for later, he's pragmatic like that. Maverick shoves his hips up and when his cock rubs against Ice's, he just about loses it then and there.

"Fuck, Mav," Ice groans as his hands slip under Maverick's shirt, yanking it up and off in one quick motion, and Maverick grabs the back of Ice's shirt and tries to pull it up and over his

head himself. Laughing, Ice draws back enough that Maverick can pull the shirt off him completely, and he tosses it off the bed before pulling Ice back down on top of him by the chain of his dog tags, sweeping his hands over the warm skin of Ice's shoulders and back with a giddy sort of ecstasy, rocking his hips forward. "Jesus, you're so good, c'mere—"

"You come here," Maverick says, and arches up to meet Ice's mouth again, and again, and Ice moves down, trailing kisses down Maverick's jaw, his neck, nipping at his collarbone with his teeth, working at the skin there, and Maverick grabs Ice by the hair just as he makes it to Maverick's chest, pulls him back up. "Fuck me."

Ice's lips are red and swollen, his pupils blown. "Mav, are you—"

"Yes," Maverick grits out. If he weren't so turned on he might laugh at the irony — like he hasn't been completely fucking sure of this for months. "Yes, Jesus, Ice, *please—"*

Ice stamps a hard kiss to Maverick's mouth and pushes him further into the mattress. "Don't move," Ice growls before he scrambles backwards off the bed and lunges for his duffel bag, while Maverick stares up at the ceiling, panting while his head spins pleasantly and wonders just where the hell Ice expects him to go. Like there's a chance in hell he'd move anywhere right now.

Ice practically jumps back on the bed with a little bottle of KY in one hand and a condom in the other, and he straddles Maverick's hips and kisses the breath out of him for a second — and then he draws back and orders, his voice low, "Take off your clothes, Mitchell."

Maverick yanks his boxers down his hips and off his legs, and yanks down Ice's too for good measure. Ice pumps KY into his hand, rubbing his fingers together; he leans in and kisses Maverick deeply, his tongue hot in Maverick's mouth and his touch even hotter as he parts Maverick's legs, trails his fingers down Maverick's cock and the inside of his thigh so slowly that Maverick's almost sobbing by the time Ice finally works a finger inside him.

He feels like he's on fire — this is better than any adrenaline rush he's ever had, better than any high that flipping off a MiG or buzzing the tower could ever give him. Every sense is heightened, the pleasure tenfold; the stretch and burn of Ice's fingers inside him, moving in slow circles, the white-hot burst of pleasure when Ice finds his prostate and presses hard, the quiet amazement on Ice's face, like he can't even believe his own luck.

And then Ice starts talking.

"This what you wanted from me, Mitchell?" Ice's voice is low and deceptively casual, like they're just talking to each other on the runway, but it's enough to send sparks through Maverick's whole body, practically driving him out of his mind. "Wanted me to spread you wide open, make every inch of you mine—"

Maverick moans, loud and shameless, and he shoves his hips forward onto Ice's fingers, feeling out of control in the best way — and then Ice starts working in a third finger, and Maverick squeezes his eyes shut, his chest heaving for air.

"So good, Mav, you're so good for me—"

“So fuck me already,” Maverick chokes out, and the fact that he’s somehow managing to be coherent with Ice’s fingers moving in him is a goddamn miracle, as far as he’s concerned. “If I’m so good then fuck me already, come on—”

Ice pulls his fingers out, and Maverick bites his lip hard to keep himself from whining aloud. He’s shivering and panting as Ice rips the foil off the condom with his teeth, and then hesitates, just for a second. “Are you—”

“If you ask me if I’m sure one more time, I’m gonna come up there and kick your fucking ass, Kazansky.”

Ice’s eyes darken, and the snap of latex is like music to Maverick’s ears.

Maverick wraps his legs around Ice’s back, and Ice yanks Maverick’s hips up roughly before he pushes in, the blunt tip of his cock in Maverick’s hole just for a second, and then he pulls out and pushes back in again, a little more pressure, a little more pleasure in the pain, and then finally Ice pushes into him again, all of him, thick and hot and *fuck, fuck, fuck.*

Maverick’s vaguely aware of the noises he’s making, this quiet *uh, uh, uh* over and over again, wrung out of him without him even thinking about it. Jesus, it’s so fucking good, all of it. It’s like doing Mach IV, that feeling of riding the edge — he can only process it in too-bright snapshots: Ice’s hips snapping forward faster and harder, Maverick pushing back into his thrusts, arching his back up off the covers, Ice’s fingers digging tightly into Maverick’s hips.

“Jesus,” Ice gasps, “come on, Mav,” and he brushes one hand over Maverick’s cock, red and throbbing and curving upward, and Maverick’s just *gone,* lost in the wave of his orgasm, his toes curling as he clenches up around Ice’s cock.

He blinks back stars, still breathing heavily. Ice is still thrusting inside him, filling him up with long sure strokes, and Maverick wraps an arm around him to bring him even closer. Grins up at him with so much lightness inside him he thinks for a wild second he’d float away if Ice weren’t anchoring him to the bed. “Come on, Ice,” he pants, goading him on, “come on, do it, I want to feel it,” and Ice groans like he got punched, and comes in him before collapsing on Maverick’s chest.

For a while all either of them can do is lay there, each trying to catch their breath. Finally, Ice props himself up on his elbows and pulls out of Maverick, sliding the condom off too. Maverick had made a little noise at the sudden emptiness, but fully relaxes back into the mattress when Ice kisses him lightly on the nose. “So,” he says, wry. “How’s that virtue of yours doing now?”

Maverick pretends to think about it. “Pretty damn good.”

Ice grins. “Glad to hear it.”

Maverick brings his hand up to touch Ice’s cheek, his hair, just to make sure he’s real. The fondness in the grin he gets back is enough to take his breath away. “Hey.” He’s smiling so

hard it kind of hurts. “Hey, Ice. Think you’d be willing to room with me for the next conference we’ve got?”

“Yeah,” Ice says. He’s smiling with every part of his face now, and Maverick already knows that he’s never going to get tired of Ice looking at him like this. “You can count on it.”

A sliver of sunlight is peeking through the curtains when Maverick wakes up, casting a faint beam over the bed. Ice is asleep on his side, facing Maverick, and Maverick’s arm is flung over Ice’s waist, the other hand curled into a loose fist against Ice’s chest, close to his heart.

Maverick glances over at the alarm clock, and he grins. He lifts his hand to cup Ice’s face, brushing the pad of his thumb over the rim of Ice’s ear.

Ice’s nose twitches. Maverick grins wider, and he kisses him awake.

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